

Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General
Attn: Antitrust Division
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RE: Amended Consent Judgment to Allow South Shore Hospital to Join Partners Healthcare

Attn: Judge Janet L. Sanders

I feel it is important to voice my opinion on the agreement that would allow the proposed merger of South Shore Hospital and Partners Healthcare because I have a unique perspective. Recently I left Massachusetts General Hospital where I worked for 8 years in the Health Information Services department to become the Director at South Shore Hospital. Thus I can comment personally on why I believe this merger is essential for South Shore Hospital and why I have a front-line appreciation for the benefits this merger would bring to the South Shore community. Additionally I consider myself a specialist on this topic because as a faculty member at Tufts University School of Medicine, where I teach budgeting and management classes as well as health information technology classes, I have to keep myself well apprised of the latest efforts across the country and across the Commonwealth to reign in overall healthcare costs...something I am 100% confident this merger will accomplish.

What I have noticed almost immediately in my transition to South Shore Hospital (SSH) is that there is a significant need for a deep investment in the infrastructure—information systems in particular. SSH would benefit significantly from the advanced electronic health record technologies in place at Partners and be better able to keep up with the newest technology opportunities. If SSH could begin to utilize the electronic health record system in place at Partners the coordination of care can occur with far fewer resources being utilized. A number of back end manual processes that are currently in place to communicate about patients between providers would become electronic instantly and dramatically reduce overall costs. The technology infrastructure I am familiar with at Partners would provide a safer environment for the patients of SSH and allow the clinicians to spend more time providing care and less time with the administrative pieces.

Having worked for many years in primary care at the Upham's Corner Health Center, Brigham and Women's Hospital and Tufts Medical Center I have grown to appreciate how vital primary care is to keeping costs down in the US healthcare system. The SSH community desperately needs access to a network of community primary care physicians that can seamlessly communicate with the specialists in the area as well as the hospital and emergency room. This does not currently exist in southeastern Massachusetts on a large scale and an investment in this type of infrastructure is something the merger with Partners will bring quickly.

While we continue to tweak methods of reimbursement in Massachusetts there is a clear trend away from fee for service and towards rewarding well coordinated care. The use of electronic medical records that can communicate across a spectrum of care and the use of infrastructure like the Mass Hlway (health information exchange in Massachusetts) is essential to realizing this potential...but only if there is the proper investment in the infrastructure at the participating hospitals. That level of investment that will reap the rewards for the state's overall health expenditures is only achievable at SSH with this merger.

In my opinion there is a lot of posturing and noise from a number of organizations that have not experienced firsthand this type of transformative healthcare. I have been on the inside looking out and now the outside looking in and I can tell you I have experienced firsthand the cost benefit of this type of investment.

I encourage you to understand that this is an investment in the health infrastructure for southeastern Massachusetts and from someone embedded deep within the operations of these hospitals I can tell you there is tremendous potential to improve quality, access, and affordability of healthcare with this investment. I would respectfully request you permit this merger to happen and watch a significant benefit for Massachusetts be realized.



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